

## Eating out over Christmas sees downturn as consumers cut back on expenditure, says QuickBite survey

Consumers cut back on their spending this Christmas with fewer people enjoying meals out over the festive period, according to the results of a new online YouGov survey for foodservice analysts Horizons.

The QuickBite survey shows that in the two week Christmas period 68% of respondents dined out, a sharp fall on last year's figure of 72% over the same period.

One third (31%) of adults responding to the survey hadn't eaten out in the past two weeks, citing expense as the most common reason.

'Christmas trade is vitally important to the foodservice sector and while some of the chains may have had stronger bookings than others, overall this survey shows that consumers were eating out less this Christmas as a cost-saving measure,' said Emma Read, director of marketing and business development at Horizons.

According to the survey respondents ate out an average of 1.83 times over the two weeks of the Christmas period. This was down on the previous year's figure of 2.1 times.

However, consumers who dined out over the Christmas period spent an average of £14.55 when they did, up 5.4% on the previous year (£13.80). The survey showed that for all consumers the price of eating out continues to be an important factor, mentioned by 66% respondents though this is down on last year (70%).

'When consumers are eating out they are making it an occasion and are spending more. This increase in spend is good news for the sector but it is more important to businesses that people continue to eat out frequently. The downturn over Christmas will have affected turnover for establishments who would previously have relied on a strong end to the year,' added Read.

The QuickBite survey also notes the ongoing popularity of pub restaurants, which now account for 20% of respondents' eating out occasions, up from 19% in June last year.

Takeaway and delivery outlets represent 16% of eating out occasions though a third of all eating out (31%) was in quick service restaurants, demonstrating the nation's continuing preference for casual dining.

While convenience and conviviality were commonly cited reasons for eating out, special occasion was the most frequently mentioned by respondents (30%) during the Christmas period.

When it comes to choosing a destination, habit remains a key influence (33%), while 12% of respondents had been recommended a destination and 8% said their choice was influenced by a voucher or offer. Family and friends proved the most common influence for those going on recommendation, mentioned by 74% of respondents. Reviews and websites influenced only 12% of these diners. The quality of the food influenced choice for 77% of respondents to the YouGov survey.

Other findings from the survey:

'While the number of people eating out decreased year-on-year in London over the Christmas period (74% in 2012 vs. 71% in 2013), the Midlands saw an increase in the number of people eating out (from 71% in 2012 to 75% in 2013)

'People least likely to eat out during the Christmas period were respondents in Wales (63%) and Scotland (62%), although Scotland sees the biggest spike in spend per head amongst those who ate out over the Christmas period, with average spend at £16.40 in this period

? Spend per head varied considerably according to age group with the average spend of 55s and over at £16.45 and 18-24 year olds spending £12.20

? Average spend per head increased this year across all age groups, except 45-54 year olds (down from £14.50 in 2012 to £14.06 in 2013)

? 25 to 34 year olds are most likely to eat out (80%) and are the most frequent customers (averaging 2.36 times), but the lowest spenders (spending an average per head of £13.50)

? The 55+ age group eat out least frequently (averaging 1.67 times), but spend more when they do (spending an average per head of £16.45)

? Overall, men showed a tendency to spend more than women on eating out during the festive period (with an average spend of £14.90 per head vs. £14.25).

All figures from YouGov Plc.

2013 survey: Total sample size was 2032 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4-7 January 2013.

2012 survey: Total sample size was 2032 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4-6 January 2012.

2012 June survey: Total sample size was 2105 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 20-22 June 2012.

Surveys were conducted online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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### **Editor's Note**

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